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THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE EXPLORATION AND PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE

EUROPEAN POSITION PAPER ON THE DRAFT REPORT OF UNISPACE III

Working paper submitted by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland on behalf of the following member States of the European Space Agency (ESA) and States having cooperation agreements with ESA: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland

1. The European Space Agency (ESA) and its member States welcome the new version of the draft report of UNISPACE III (A/CONF.184/PC/L.1) prepared by the Secretariat. This document, to a large extent, reflects many of the deliberations and positions put forward in the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee of the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space by various delegations prior to the decision of holding the said event and during the work of the Advisory Committee.

2. In this position paper, ESA and its member States have chosen to make general comments on the draft report. However, each of the ESA member States will then make more specific comments on the various paragraphs or sections during the forty-first session of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, when the draft report of UNISPACE III is to be discussed.

3. The comments and suggestions are divided in three separate sections: the structure of the report, the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development and the text of the report.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

4. The Secretariat has produced a well-structured and rich document. Nevertheless the document, given all the specific topics it covers and which it must contain, is very long. In order to have a document which can be circulated and read by the various target groups, it is indispensable to produce a short and concise executive summary. The executive summary should cover the international context, highlight some globally important space applications and have an index with the chapters and sections.

5. To facilitate the reading of the report, it would be beneficial to have all proposed actions listed together in one separate chapter.

VIENNA DECLARATION ON SPACE AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

6. The Vienna Declaration as it reads today is too vague and needs a stronger message. It should be divided in two parts:

(a) An introduction, which is more visionary, covering the reasons for conducting space research, attempting to answer questions pertinent to all, such as the origins of the Earth etc.;

(b) The second part of the Declaration should cover the specific action programmes. For each action line, the implementing partners should clearly be identified, as well as, if feasible, the time-frame and budget for implementing the proposal.

TEXT OF THE REPORT

7. This third section covers some general suggestions from ESA member States related to the draft report. While the report is considered to be too long already, it is thought that the following areas need to be covered or given greater emphasis if a balanced report is to be produced:

(a) In order to raise the visibility, a more detailed description and analysis of space applications within the United Nations system would improve the draft report. Given the fact that UNISPACE III is the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, such a description of how the various programmes and agencies within the United Nations use space applications within their mandate is important. References to the actions of these organizations should also, when appropriate, be incorporated in the text (compare with document A/AC.105/675 of 12 May 1997);

(b) The Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82) was held 16 years ago. At the time, many recommendations were adopted. A creative and constructive assessment on the ways used to implement those recommendations would improve the report, as well as give a positive message to the Member States of the United Nations (compare with document A/AC.105/692 of 12 January 1998).

8. Although briefly touched upon in the later part of the draft report, a deeper reflection on what will be the consequences of UNISPACE III for the Committee on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space would be useful.

9. UNISPACE III being dedicated to the new millennium, it seems advisable to open the perspective for the young. Many issues are of global concern, such as the environment, and will have an impact on future generations. It is therefore important to strengthen the outreach programme for youth.

10. In the text technology transfer is frequently mentioned; in many fields it would be more appropriate to talk of transfer of knowledge, which is a concrete action that takes place and has been supported within the United Nations Programme on Space Applications.

11. The document should place less emphasis on the technological differences between developed and developing countries. Space technology has permitted many developing countries to "leapfrog" over aspects of the industrial revolution straight into the information age. Examples should be highlighted in the report.